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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the Tri-Partite Theory of institutional change, which proposes that organizations in general and educational institutions in particular pass through three phases, each dominated by a specific personality type: person-orientation (loyalty to a charismatic leader as the basis of motivation); plan-orientation (functions controlled by a planner, supported by members); and position-orientation (bureaucratic ossification and loss of purpose). Each of these phases of orientation, and the personality types that dominate them, are described in detail, along with examples from a wide range of historical, organizational, and educational contexts. Included is a discussion of an optimum "synergistic" personality type, combining traits of both the charismatic leader and the planner. Implications of the Tri-Partite Theory for selecting educational leaders are then discussed. (TE)

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A THEORY OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE AND CONTROL:

TRI-PARTITE POWER

by

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It is because modern education is so seldom inspired by a great hope that it so seldom achieves a great result.

Bertrand Russell
Why Men Fight

A THEORY OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE AND CONTROL: TRI-PARTITE POWER

Two facts about the American way of life are apparent to even the most casual observer. First, Americans live in a sea of formal organizations. Second, Americans truly believe themselves to be free men--they do not consider themselves slaves. Yet, we are all enslaved by an apparently invariable cycle through which our organizations mindlessly pass.¹ Organizations designed to achieve Y results often perversely (as if they have lives of their own) head in X directions producing frustrations, dissatisfactions and, increasingly, alienation. This oppressive institutional cycle will prevail unless positive action is taken to alter its course.

The Tri-Partite Theory of institutional change may be of interest to educators and the public in light of our increasing need to select chief executives (superintendents, principals) who are able to keep our schools and vital institutions viable and productive in this age of decline and change. This paper proposes that institutional change is not only predictable but can be consciously managed and directed, providing that we know how to select leadership which has both the personality and the skills to do it. Obviously, then, an understanding of the dynamics of institutional renewal and revitalization is of strategic concern to all educators and, indeed, to all Americans concerned with our survival.

¹Wilson, L. Craig, Byar, T. Madison, Shapiro, Arthur S., and Schell, Shirley H., Sociology of Supervision. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1969.

The Basic Theory

Much organizational theory and research has produced abstract formulations of motivation and leadership. It has not focused on the ability of top leadership to energize the organization and give it direction to meet the needs of its clientelle better and to plan more effectively to accomplish its purposes. The Tri-Partite Theory of institutional change suggests that institutions and organizations change in a definite, predictable sequence, which, when understood, can be purposively redirected and managed. By selecting appropriate leadership, new goals can be developed, and the organization can organize and plan to solve its major problems.

The theory proposes that educational institutions (individual schools, departments, school systems, colleges, universities) are dominated in succession by one of three institutional orientations--Person, Plan, and Position. In the first, orientation to a person, the majority of the members of the organization are motivated by their loyalty to an attractive, dynamic leader who is able to capture their imagination. In the second, Plan-orientation, the functions of the organization are controlled by some level of planning, which the members largely support. Position-orientation, the third phase of institutional development, occurs when purposes are lost and ossification sets in. The institution stabilizes, the bureaucracy freezes change into slow-motion--and inertia becomes a major fact of life. The institution tries to maintain the status quo, but has difficulty in adjusting to ever-changing conditions.

As will be seen shortly, three personality typologies plus a combination correspond to these three phases of an institution's career. Figure 1 shows the Tri-Partite Power Theory in diagrammatic form.

FIGURE 1

Phases of Organizational
Change: Tri- Partite Theory

CHARISMATIC
LEADER
(PERSON ORIENTED)

BUREAUCRAT
(POSITION
ORIENTED)

PLANNER
(PLAN ORIENTED)

The succession of phases seems to occur in a fixed rotational order as a result of internal struggles and progressive loss of purpose. Analysis of the nature of this three-phased process reveals the importance of selecting the top executive in any institution.

In Figure 1, the basic leadership tendency is to move the institutional orientation into one or the other of the three orientations.

While these three orientations exist concurrently in most institutions, at any given time one particular orientation tends to dominate the loyalty of a majority of the members. Whichever orientation controls the institution exercises the power which determines the institution's course of action and its capacity to deal effectively with its problems and environment.

Person-Orientation--The Charismatic Leader

The greatest dynamic for change is in the Person phase of the cycle because new values and goals can be introduced by and identified with a dynamic leader. When common institutionalized practices are perceived as failing to meet needs, when the organization drifts, tied up in red tape and operating in a crisis mentality, the organization may select new top leadership. If this administrator can set new visions and can meet the needs both of members of the institution, and its clientele and if s/he also has personal magnetism, or charisma, s/he will probably develop a following. Thus, Person-Orientation occurs.

Organizations characterized by Person-orientation are often dynamic and subject to rapid change with little regard for tradition. Vision is often wide, action can be bold, daring and exciting. In later phases people will look back and comment on their audacity. The organization is

caught up in a feeling of collective excitement.² This phase may be likened to a sort of adolescent period in the institution's career. Action and ideas are often grandiose, impulsive, dynamic, imaginative.

Under Person-orientation, change is identified with the value patterns of the leader since people often identify with him/her and, therefore, accept his/her values. A chief motivating factor of membership is personal recognition by major leaders; promotion is usually a reward resulting from such recognition.

In this way people in the organization become oriented or attracted toward an individual, i.e., they become Person-oriented. Members become attached to a leader because of the attractive nature of his/her personality and because his/her ideas represent their own often undiagnosed feelings and aspirations.

The Charismatic Leader in Person-Orientation

The charismatic leader has been differentiated by Weber from those who lead by virtue of authority of tradition, (the patriarch) and from those whose authority springs from position, (the bureaucrat). Weber perceives charismatic leaders as "natural" leaders, men/women with dynamic, often compelling and attractive personalities around whom others gather and look for direction.³ Examples abound: John F. Kennedy,

²Blumer, Herbert, "Collective Behavior," in Principles of Sociology, ed. Alfred McClung Lee. New York: Barnes & Noble, 2nd ed. 1946, revised 1951.

³From Max Weber, Essays in Sociology, trans. Gerth, H.H. and Mills, C. Wright, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946). Merton, Robert K., Grey, P., Hockey, Barbara, and Selvin, Hanan C. (eds.), Reader in Bureaucracy, (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1952). Whyte, William H., Jr., The Organization Man, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1956). Blau, Peter M., The Dynamics of Bureaucracy, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955). Kaufman, Bel, Up the Down Staircase, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964).

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Anwar Sadat, and Adolph Hitler in politics come to mind. In unions one finds Walter Reuther, John L. Lewis, and Jimmy Hoffa. In the religious domain Pope John Paul II, Christ, Mohammed, Moses, Billy Graham and the Ayotallah Khomeini are examples. The military can point to Generals Robert E. Lee, Douglas MacArthur, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Field Marshalls Erwin Rommel and Bernard Montgomery. Charity boasts Jerry Lewis for muscular dystrophy. In education, Horace Mann, Robert Maynard Hutchins, B. Frank Brown (of Melbourne Florida and the ungraded high school), and Richard Foster may be named. Luvern Cunningham of The Ohio State University, Dwight Allen, Roger Bardwell (formerly of Elk Grove Village, Ill), Gene Geisert of New Orleans, Johnny Jones of Miami, Fla, Kenneth Peters of Beverly Hills, Robert Finley of Glen Cove, N.Y., and Ronald Simcox of Hinsdale, Ill., come to mind.

Leadership in this orientation is often that of the highly capable, all-around leader who appears to run the institution single-handedly. Unfortunately, however, successors to such people usually are disappointments.⁴ Since the leader's followers consider his/her ideas and beliefs invaluable, when the innovator leaves the group the followers tend to incorporate his/her ideas into institutional structures and practices to stabilize them. Often they are turned into doctrine rather than ideas, and become somewhat distorted in the process. The elements of power centralized in the leader become decentralized through increasing dependency upon the special abilities of people to carry out the ideas concertedly.

⁴Gerth, H.H., Mills, C. Wright, trans., From Max Weber, Essays in Sociology. New York: Oxford University Press, 1946, also Etzioni, Amitai, Modern Organizations. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964.

To summarize, if an organization has been doing little to meet the needs of its clientele, appears to be drifting without much purpose except survival, is tied up in red tape, if leadership appears merely to be adjusting to crises and not on taking action to resolve the conditions causing crises, then those who have the power to select top leadership can change those conditions dramatically by selecting a charismatic leader to energize the organization and start taking action (hopefully, appropriate, depending upon the abilities of that leader). The Tri-Partite Theory, then, can assist organizations in solving their most basic problems: setting purposes that meet the needs of the organization and its clients, organizing and planning to achieve the purposes, and viability and survival.

Plan-Orientation--The Planner

Plan-orientation is the intermediate state in the Tri-Partite Theory. It follows the departure of a dynamic leader and marks the apparent end of Person-orientation as followers seek to perpetuate the leader's ideas by incorporating them into some plan. This is illustrated by the five-year plans developed during the latter part of the Russian revolutionary period. China's Great Leap Forward perhaps represents the onset of this planning phase and the beginning of the end of Person-orientation under Mao Tse-Tung.

Under Plan-orientation, planning may range from institutional maintenance to synergistic comprehensive planning - the cooperative action of two or more components in which a total effect is greater than the sum of the effects taken independently. Modular scheduling, independent study and team teaching in a package make a more effective learning environment than all three functioning independently. Synergistic planning, then, combines

independent elements into a composite of much greater power than the individual action of its components.

While planning can occur in all three orientations, it is the nature of the planning that is important. Under Person-orientation planning is apt to be ad hoc, pragmatic, and expedient, running in all directions with no unified purpose. Planning under Plan-orientation tends to be more goal-oriented, utilitarian, and logical. At its best, it has an inter-related design of structures involving the total institution.

The Planner in Plan Orientation

The planner is a different personality than the charismatic leader. While having some dynamic and attractive components to his/her personality, those are not as essential to this person's functioning. A capacity to organize, to create plans to move the organization is essential, as is the ability to implement those plans.

In politics, Lyndon B. Johnson, Ho Chi Minh and Mao Tse Tung were planners. In unions, business, and philanthropy, Sears, Coca Cola, and Basil O'Connor of the March of Dimes developed and implemented plans. Various Walden II communities and some communes are plans. The Israeli Kibbutz is a plan based on a variety of social philosophies. Generals Omar Bradley and Douglas MacArthur were planners as was Ulysses S. Grant. In education, Lloyd Trump's model is a plan. So is B. Frank Brown's non-graded school. A.S. Neill's Summerhill is a plan as was Hutchin's program to reform the University of Chicago into a "classical" curriculum based on the Great Books.

Other plans are the I.G.E. program, the Philadelphia School without Walls, and schools which organize around one or more ideas such as team teaching, open space schools, middle schools, etc. Karl Plath, of Highland

Park-Deerfield High School District, Illinois is a planner as is Paul Masem of Little Rock, Ark. So are Morton Abromowitz of Great Neck, Allen Bonnell of the Community College of Philadelphia, and Edwin MacBeth of Hinsdale, Illinois.

Some planning does occur under Position-orientation, but its purpose is to preserve the status quo. This planning is characterized by ceremony, elaborate meetings, and multitudinous reports.

Person and Plan--The Synergistic Personality

Some leaders have charisma and can plan. A synergistic process (synergism) is characterized as the cooperative action of two or more components in which the total effect is greater than the sum of the effects taken independently. Penicillin alone did not wipe out tuberculosis, nor did streptomycin. Together, they can destroy t.b. bacilli. Two drugs working cooperatively are a synergy. A synergist in administration combines charismatic leader behavior and planning. This combination gives the synergist considerable leverage to effect change. Many of the most effective people in education presently are synergists. Because synergists are planners as well as charismatic, some names used before will reappear. General Douglas MacArthur was a synergist as was Robert E. Lee. Robert MacNamara was a synergist (developing the Mustang for Ford): Walter Reuther and Samuel Gompers were his counterparts in unions. Pope John XII and Martin Luther King, Joan of Arc, Queen Elizabeth I and Charlemagne all had major goals they implemented via plans. Horace Mann and Johann Sturm, who founded the gymnasium in the sixteenth century, are examples of synergists. Contemporary educators with charismatic personalities and a plan are B. Frank Brown, whose ungraded high school has been widely discussed and J. Lloyd Trump with his model, a synergy of several elements,

and Eugene Howard. Stanton Leggett, of course, is an outstanding example of a synergist, as is Charles Fowler of Fairfield, Conn., whose long range planning, particularly in financial matters, brings him to mind. Morton Abromowitz, of Great Neck, is a combination planner and charismatic person as is Otis Allen, of Leiflore County, Miss. John Lawson of Lexington, Mass., formerly of Shaker Heights, where he was instrumental in an unusual integration plan which maintained high quality, has the unusual abilities that synergists apparently possess and develop.

Kenneth Peters, of Beverly Hills, is a talented synergist as is Allen Bonnell of Philadelphia's Community College. H.E. "Hap" Corley, Supt. of Richland County School Dist. #2 outside of Columbia, S.C., comes to mind as does Paul Masem of Little Rock and Gordon McAndrews of Columbia, S.C., itself.

On the College level one thinks of Jacqueline Grennan, formerly of Webster Groves, and Robert Anderson of the University of Texas. Luvern Cunningham and Father Hepsburg of Notre Dame, are also synergists. In their schools things are happening. Projects are coordinated into a plan with a distinct strategy. Educationally exciting programs are considered and developed. A sense of purpose and direction is apparent.

Position-Orientation--The Bureaucratic Personality

Position-orientation usually follows Plan-orientation as divisions of labor multiply rapidly to implement institutional plans. As the bureaucracy develops, rules are enacted to accomplish goals and organizational flexibility diminishes--dogma, ritual, ceremony, red tape and routine proliferate. Bureaucratization invariably leads to precise job descriptions and to methods of doing things which become "the way." In Position-orientation the members of an institution develop relatively

standard expectations for leadership in carefully defined hierarchical positions. Position-orientation is basically fatalistic and static, backward-looking and ceremonial in operation. Rank takes precedence over ideas, and change is greater finesse in performing duties long-since reduced to routine by prior office holders. Succession to office brings in administrators whose changes are generally more ceremonial than representative of any new thought.

As positions become precisely defined, the expectancies surrounding them become oppressive to many subject to them. Many creative, idea-oriented people and those who chafe under increasing red tape and restriction leave increasing the organization's stasis.

The Bureaucratic Personality in Position Orientation

The bureaucratic or administrative personality has been a focus of attention of late.⁵ This administrator focuses on managerial functions, on the smooth operation of the ship rather than on developing original, boundary-breaking programs or on developing and implementing plans.

The bureaucratic's forte is the nuts and bolts details of administration. The clean desk and the neat, tidy, closed-ended packaged program constitute the boundaries of their problem solving capacities. Since the perception of purpose is organizational maintenance, defence of the status quo with past solutions is the modus operandi. To such a perceptual world, theoretical formulations, frames of reference, models and strategies are either irrelevant or frightening.

Just as Person-orientation has been compared to adolescence and Plan-orientation to maturity, so Position-orientation has attributes of senescence. Lacking imagination, daring and viability, the organization

⁵Kaufman, Bel. Op. Cit.

appears to move along a pre-determined path, resisting the innovation needed to catch up with the times.

Most big-city school systems are prime examples of Position-orientation: many of their complex difficulties result from being frozen in this static phase unable to cope with a rapidly changing environment. While many smaller school systems are also Position-oriented, their prognosis may be more favorable because their chances of entering into a Person-oriented phase are greater.

Organizations often decide to remain in Position-Orientation in choosing successors to departing administrators. Often coalitions of sub-administrators sign petitions supporting an insider. Rarely will an insider bring in the charisma, the dynamism and the capacity to move the organization into the Person-Oriented phase. Insiders usually are fettered by patterns of obligations, particularly after the intense politicking in their behalf by their constituents. Considerable pressure is brought to bear on board members to support insiders, often causing them to bow to pressure one by one. But the result is usually predictable - continued slow decline and organizational drift.

Summary, Some Applications and Implications

The Tri-Partite Theory describes, analyzes, and predicts the progress of institutions through the phases of Person, Plan, and Position-orientation. This understanding should now make it possible to plan the career of an institution to remain in a planning status. Society's increasing complexities and accelerated rate of change demand that institutions remain viable. Deliberate matching of institutional orientation, leadership style and commitment of membership can minimize alienation and maximize synergism.

Through knowledge of the sequence of phases, leadership can be selected which can move the organization into a viable phase of its life cycle. Then, planning strategies and structures can be developed by administrators and supervisors to move and stabilize the organization into a desirable phase. The theory, thus, brings new insights into organizational renewal and viability.

In this paper four types of personalities have been proposed, three of which correspond with the three phases of institutional development, plus a combination of two types: the bureaucratic with Position-orientation, the comprehensive planner with Plan-orientation, the charismatic leader with Person-orientation of an institution, and the synergist who combines charismatic leader behavior and planning. One conclusion suggested is that we take charge of our organizations by selecting leadership who will try to keep our organizations viable rather than permitting them to drift. Another proposal is that planning comprehensively is mandatory for education in our technological-corporate society. Since synergistic leaders are infrequent in most organizations, synergistic staffing (combining charismatic leaders and planners) suggests a way of achieving innovative climates without sacrificing basic stability.

Some questions can be asked: for example, does the theory have implications for describing the present low rate of productivity of educational supervision as a profession? Do we need new life, new visions, perhaps stimulated by new models and new leadership in supervision? What curriculum structures and other organizational restructuring can be useful in promoting organizational viability and greater member satisfaction?

How can we better prepare administrators and supervisors to function more effectively in the various phases an organization passes through?

Lastly, in which phase does each of us fit best? And in this era of diminishing job mobility, can we remain in an organization that careens through its career and yet retain our professional selves continuing to be productive?